

*Thank you, Chair Senator Feldman, Vice Chair Senator Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee for the opportunity to support Senate Bill 980.*

My name is Janet Bih Fofang, I am a recent Ph.D. graduate in the field of Learning Sciences from the University of Maryland, specializing in the study of Computational Thinking in early-grade classrooms. During my graduate studies, I spent four years developing and implementing computational thinking integration into DCPS elementary-grade mathematics classrooms. I have seen firsthand the transformative impact that such initiatives can have on young learners. I am advocating that computational thinking skills are important skills every young learner must possess, the same as reading, writing, and math. These skills must be developed early on if we intend to train learners to navigate the digital world

In my doctoral research, titled “Computational Thinking in Early Grade Classrooms: How young learners interact with physical devices to ground their understanding of computational thinking”; I explored how children in early grades engage with computational thinking concepts through hands-on experiences with tangible devices, including robots. Through this research, I have gained valuable insights into the cognitive processes and learning behaviors of young learners as they develop computational thinking skills.

When integrated early into curricula, Computer Science and Robotics in elementary school can help address the growing demand for STEM skills in the workforce and ensure that Maryland's students are prepared to thrive in the 21st-century economy. By providing access to Computer Science and Robotics education at an early age, we can empower all students, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, to develop the critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills needed to succeed in an increasingly technology-driven world.

I urge you to support legislation that promotes the integration of early-grade Computer Science and Robotics programs in Maryland elementary schools. By investing in the education of our youngest learners and providing them with the tools and resources they need to excel in the digital age, we can ensure a brighter future for all Marylanders.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Janet Shufor Bih epse Fofang.